

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown below. After amendment, the status of the claims will be as shown below.

Claims 1 - 61 (cancelled)

62. (previously presented) A clamping apparatus comprising:

a frame;

a plurality of clamping arms pivotably mounted on the frame, each clamping arm including a contact portion for contacting a load to be lifted, each clamping arm defining a four-bar linkage which controls an angle of the contract portion with respect to the vertical as the clamping arm pivots with respect to the frame; and

at least one drive mechanism connected to one of the clamping arms to pivot the one of the clamping arms with respect to the frame.

63. (previously presented) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein the four-bar linkage comprises a parallel linkage which maintains the angle of the contact portion with respect to the vertical constant as the clamping arm pivots with respect to the frame.

64. (currently amended) A clamping apparatus as claimed in

claim 62 wherein the four-bar linkage of each clamping arm includes a lever portion pivotably connected to the frame and to the contact portion of the clamping arm, and a control rod extending alongside the lever portion and ~~pivotably connected~~ having an upper end pivotable with respect to the frame and a lower end pivotable with respect to the contact portion, ~~the four bar linkage comprising the lever portion, the control rod, a portion of the frame extending between the lever portion and the control rod, and a portion of the contact portion extending between the lever portion and the control rod.~~

65. (previously presented) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein a separation between the contact portions of two of the clamping arms opposing each other can change by at least 4 inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion of the two opposing clamping arms changing no more than 2 degrees.

Claims 66 - 74 (cancelled)

75. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 64 wherein the control rod has an adjustable length.

76. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 75 wherein the length of the control rod can be adjusted by rotating a body of the control rod.

77. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein a separation between the contact portions of two of the clamping arms opposing each other can change by at least 4 inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion of the two opposing clamping arms changing no more than 1 degree.

78. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein a separation between the contact portions of two of the clamping arms opposing each other can change by at least 4 inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion of the two opposing clamping arms changing no more than 0.5 degrees.

79. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein a separation between the contact portions of two of the clamping arms opposing each other can change by at least 8 inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion of the two opposing clamping arms changing no more than 2 degrees.

80. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein a separation between the contact portions of two of the clamping arms opposing each other can change by at least 10

inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion of the two opposing clamping arms changing no more than 2 degrees.

81. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein the angle with respect to the vertical of the contact portion of any of the clamping arms varies by at most 2 degrees as a lower end of the contact portion travels by a horizontal distance of at least 6 inches as the clamping arm pivots with respect to the frame.

82. (new) A clamping apparatus as claimed in claim 62 wherein the angle with respect to the vertical of the contact portion of any of the clamping arms varies by at most 2 degrees as a lower end of the contact portion travels by a horizontal distance of at least 8 inches as the clamping arm pivots with respect to the frame.

83. (new) A clamping apparatus comprising:

a frame;

a plurality of clamping arms pivotably mounted on the frame, each clamping arm including a lever portion pivotably mounted on the frame, a contact portion for contacting a load to be lifted pivotably mounted on the lever portion, and an adjustable-length rod extending alongside the lever portion and having a lower end pivotable with respect to the contact portion, a change in the

length of the rod changing an angle of the contact portion with respect to the lever portion; and

at least one drive mechanism connected to one of the lever portions to pivot the lever portion with respect to the frame.

84. (new) A clamping apparatus comprising:

a frame;

two opposing clamping arms pivotably mounted on the frame, each clamping arm including a contact portion for contacting a load to be lifted, and

at least one drive mechanism connected to one of the clamping arms to pivot the one of the clamping arms with respect to the frame,

wherein a separation between the contact portions of the clamping arms can change by at least 4 inches due to pivoting of at least one of the opposing clamping arms relative to the frame with an angle with respect to the vertical of each contact portion changing no more than 2 degrees when the contact portions are not contacting a load.

85. (new) A method of using a clamping apparatus comprising grasping a load from a plurality of sides with the clamping apparatus of claim 84.

86. (new) A method as claimed in claim 85 wherein the load comprises a layer of items disposed on a pallet.

87. (new) A method of using a clamping apparatus comprising grasping a load having a width which differs from its width by at least 4 inches from four sides with the clamping apparatus of claim 62, the angles of the inner surfaces of the contact portions of the clamping arms varying among the clamping arms by at most 2°.

88. (new) A method as claimed in claim 87 wherein the width and the length of the load differ by at least 8 inches.

89. (new) A method as claimed in claim 87 wherein the width and the length of the load differ by at least 10 inches.